







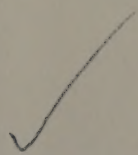
GEN



3 1833 03155 5482

Gc 977.601 M87h

The History of Bear Creek  
Centennial, 1856-1956





THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
BEAR CREEK



CENTENNIAL  
1856 — 1956

Allen County Public Library  
900 Webster Street  
PO Box 2270  
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270



## FOREWORD

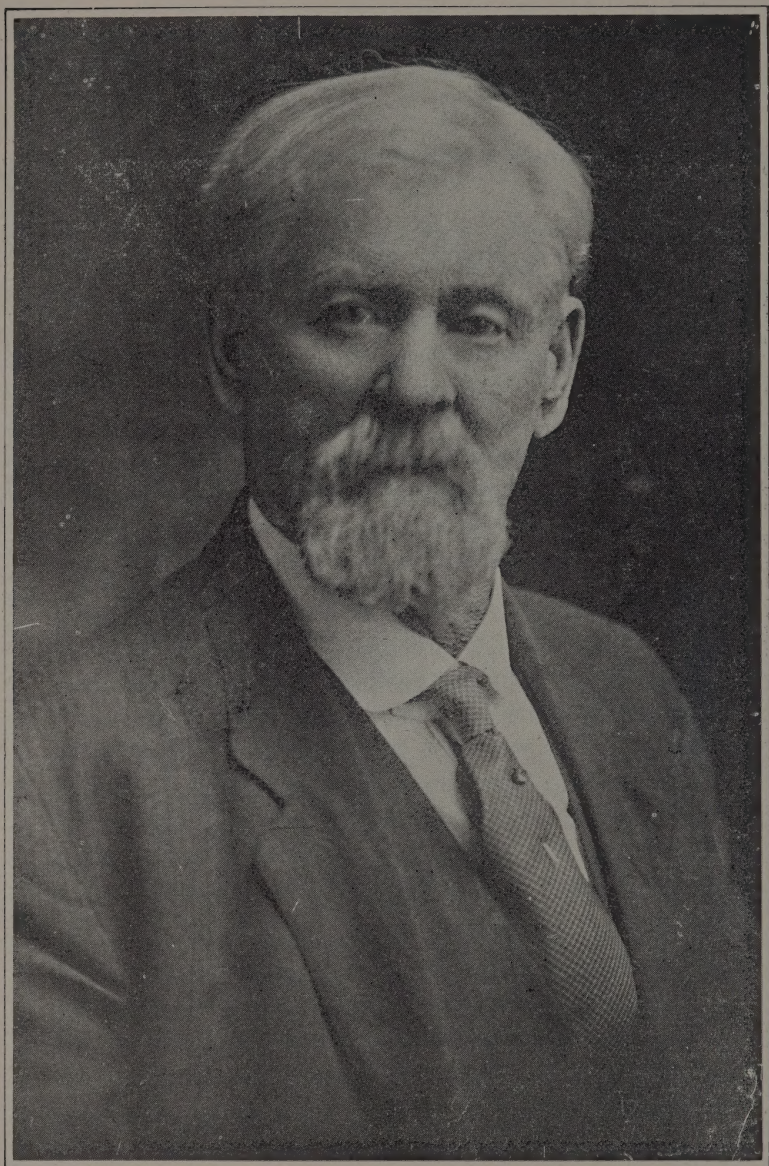
"O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever."

Psalm 107:1

There is a feeling of heartfelt gratitude in the Bear Creek Congregation as we assemble for this occasion. It is fitting and proper that we remember to give praise and thanks unto the Lord.

One cannot help but be grateful for the many blessings of the Church on this day. It is through His goodness and mercy that blessings have been given to generation after generation. The Lord has continued His work of salvation in this congregation during these one hundred years. God's Word has been preached and the Sacraments administered. We remember especially today that we have been the recipients of all His blessings.

Let us today, and every day, give thanks unto Him. May it be our sincere prayer that the good and merciful God will continue to let His blessing rest upon us in the days to come. May His name be glorified in our midst through the salvation of souls and righteous living.



L. G. HANSEN

To whom credit must be given for writing and preserving part  
of the early history of Bear Creek



## HISTORY OF BEAR CREEK

The beginning of the Bear Creek community can be credited to Ole Finhart, Sr. He had read of the land along the upper water courses of the Root River in Minnesota Territory and was seized with a desire to "go west." A number of others were inspired by his enthusiasm and a colony was organized.

On the Fourth of July, 1914, the people of this community of Norwegian birth and descent met at the home of Sever Hovda, Sr., in memory of the arrival of the first Norwegian settlers in the townships now known as Frankford, Racine and Grand Meadow. This being the sixtieth anniversary of their landing.

By an unanimous vote of the assembled people, Lars G. Hanson and Ole Jorgens were requested to collect facts and write a history of the early life in the settlement.

This early settlement being largely along a small stream of water which they named Bear Creek due to the following incident: Ole Olson Severud was an ingenious man, a gunsmith. Soon after his arrival he shot a bear with the gun, made by himself. The bear was shot somewhere in the woods along the creek between the old Sever Temanson farm and the farm now owned by the Anderson Brothers. The people of the settlement adopted the name "Bear Creek Settlement" and it has always been recognized by this name by other Norwegian settlements in Minnesota and this was legally established in the organization of the Lutheran Church Association by the adoption of the name "Bear Creek Norwegian Lutheran" as the incorporated name of the congregation.

The first party of colonists were nearly all native Norwegians except a few young children. All were born in the church parishes in the judicial district named Valdris in Norway.

The first settlers left Norway as emigrants for America between the years 1840 and 1853. All came across the Atlantic Ocean in sailing vessels and nearly all of them temporarily made their homes in Dane County, Wisconsin.

The first arrivals in Bear Creek were Ole Olson Finhart, Ole Simonson Jabraaten and wife Liv and children Simon, Beret, and Sever; Ole Olson Hovda and wife Kari and children, Ole, Kari, and Sever, Herman, Arne, Engebret and Guri; Amund Lindelien and wife Marit and child Beret born in Wisconsin. Anders A. Lybeck and wife Sigri and child Kari; Ole Ol-

son Severud and wife Magdalena and children Trond and Anne born in Wisconsin. Hans Anderson Gamlemoen and wife Ragnild; Nils Severson Moen and wife Elen; Amund Johnson Klatsolen and wife Anne; Ole Julsen, Knud Nilson Haugerstuen, Sever Olson Skalshaugen and brother Erland.

This body of first settlers were thirty-six in number. They moved in two separate bodies, all in tented wagons drawn by oxen and bringing with them household goods and a few carpenter and blacksmith tools.

Nearly all single persons as well as families brought one or more milk cows, some had sheep, hens and pigs which were put in boxes attached to the wagon boxes. The two moving caravans arrived in Frankford township on the same day and constructed their camp on section 9 in township 103, range 14.

From this point or camping ground the colonists, individual or head of families, started out in search of land for their future home. All the lands with the townships now called Racine, Grand Meadow and Frankford was government land except a few quarter sections claimed by land speculators under soldier warrants.

In a few days, all persons entitled to preempt public land had each selected his prospective homestead. Ole Simonson was



by common consent allowed to make his home on the southeast quarter of section five in township 103, range 14. For the



sake of getting a temporary dwelling ready as quickly as possible, four men, heads of families joined hands in building a log house twenty-two feet by sixteen feet and twelve feet high. The roof was thatched with pieces of bark and over the bark was square pieces of sod very carefully laid.

In this house four families lived the first winter. In this house on November 2, 1854, the first child of the colonists, was born to Mr. and Mrs. Nels Severson Moen, a girl. The next summer, 1855, the three families who had lived together with Mr. and Mrs. Ole Simonsen during the winter, moved on their own claims.

In 1856 came John Amundsen Lindelien and wife Beret and with them the following children: Thora, Ole, Gulik, Gunhild. Thora became the wife of Aslak Knudsen Aamodt, Gunhild the wife of Dr. O. W. Anderson of Rochester, Minnesota. Then the same year came Anna Oxnaberg, sister of Mrs. O. Florand, Sr., and her son Torgeir. She married Sever Olson Skalshaugen.

In 1858 came Amund Finhart and his sister Sigrid. Ole Sorflaten and wife Olia and son Ole. With Finharts came Anders Halvorson Millevandet and wife Olia.

In 1861 came a large number of emigrants to Bear Creek directly from Norway as follows, Gutorm Hanson Modalen and wife Kjersti and children Else, Lars, Beret, Hans, Kari, Christi, Gunhild-Maria, and Anne Christine, the whole family born in Norway. Elsie became the wife of Michael Olson Beltestad. He died and she married Borger Anderson. Beret married Nels Julson, Kari married Mikkell Molstad. She died and then he married the sister Anne Christine. Christi married Vegger Torgrimson, Gunhild Maria married Knute Iverson (the parents of Adolph Iverson of Grand Meadow).

In the Modalen group came Martha the wife of J. H. J. Weeks. Ragnild Guliksbraaten married Erland Olson Skalshaugen; and her sister, Anne Thorina, who married Engebret Hovda; Hans Simonson and wife Olia and son Simon. Hans was a brother of Ole Simonson and to Maria, wife of Erick Severson Oimoen. Also in this group came Erick Severson Oimoen and wife Maria, with two children, Ragnild, who married Halvor Jorgens, and son Simon. Erick Haugen came at this time.

In July 1861 came Engebret Sorben and wife Kari and

children, Ole, Beret, Anton. Beret became the wife of Eilef Jorgens. Also came Knute Knudson Ostegaarden Sr., and Knute Jr., and daughters Ingeborg and Sigrid. Ingeborg married a man in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Sigrid married Arne T. Boen. Sever Skaran and wife Marit with them were the children Anne, wife of Trond Boen and sons Sever and Ole and daughter Beret, wife of Sever M. Hoff and Dortia, wife of Simon Simonson. Jens Brager and wife Kari and children Ole, Hans and daughter Oliana, wife of Ole Tande.

In 1862 came Arne T. Boen to Bear Creek from Iowa and Engebret Nelson Haugerstuen and family, wife Aaste and sons Nels, Haldor and Erik and daughter Siri, wife of Sever Hovda Sr. With the Nelson family came John Week Sr., and wife Ingeborg and at that time one child, Johannes Jr., and with them came Nils Julson and wife Ragnild and Erik Tveit and his wife Astri.

In 1863 came Jorgen Olson Hellingen, the family in becoming citizens of the United States adopted the name Jorgens. His wife's name was Secil and the children with them were Eilef, Siri, wife of Ole Sween. Ole and Ingrid Jorgens had come to Bear Creek before their parents. Sigrid became the wife of Sever Bohn. Ingrid was the wife of Amund Finhart.

On the third Sunday in June 1856, Rev. C. L. Clausen held the first Lutheran church service in the Ole Simonson house and organized the Bear Creek Lutheran congregation. Rev. Clausen presided and Gulik Dalen acted as secretary. Ole Finhart and Ole Simonson were elected trustees.

At this first service and organization meeting that was held at this first house of the colonists, six children were baptized, Gunhild and Marit, daughters of Nils and Elen Severson Moen; Ole, son of Kari Finhart; Joseph, son of Chresten and Anne Tuf; Anne, daughter of Hans and Ragnild Anderson Gamlemoen; Engebret, son of Amund and Marit Johnson Lindelien.

The Dalen family with other families and individuals came early in the spring 1856. They were Ole Florand and wife Martha and child Ragnild. Also Jonas Nelson Berg and his wife Marit and daughters Ragnild and Kristine, Halvor Johannesen Week and wife Jorand and children Johannes, Siri, Ragnild, and Kari. Together with the Week family came Ole Lunde, Nils Lunde, Peder Huset, Gulbrand Renna and Anders Torhaug. They came to Bear Creek June 22, 1856.



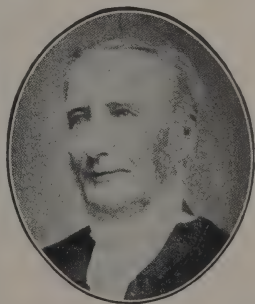
The date the school district No. 36 was organized is not known, but part of the deed given for the school house ground bears the date of the 17th day of January 1859, and is signed by Ole and Liv Simonson and certified by Walter S. Both, Justice of the Peace. The land contained one-half acre in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , Section 5, Town 103, Range 14. Minnesota was yet a territory. The school house was built by voluntary work. The men of the settlement each brought a certain number of logs squared and hewed and fitted them into the building. The house, from foundation with walls, roof and furniture included, was all completed by free and voluntary contributions. The building was built for a school house and temporary church and as such it was used for many years.

The next winter the first English school was held in this family dwelling and Mrs. Henry Moore was the teacher.

After the log school was built the settlement had visits now and then from one pastor, Jensen of Highland, Fillmore County, Minnesota.

### **Rev. A. C. Preus**

In May 1858, Rev. A. C. Preus came to Rock Dell upon request, from St. Olaf's church to conduct church services. Announcement was communicated to the Bear Creek people informing them that if they wished to have any ministerial services administered they were invited to come to this church meeting. Most of the people of Bear Creek went to Rock Dell and brought many children to be baptized and eight to be confirmed. The meeting was held under a large oak tree on Goldberg's farm. The ones confirmed were Beret and Simon, children of Ole Simonson, Siri and Ragnild Week, daughters of Halvor Week, Engebret and Guri, children of Ole Olson Hovda Sr., and Gunhild and Gulik, children of John Amundson Lindelien. These young people were examined in their religious knowledge and confirmed in the Lutheran faith. How many children were baptized is not known, but there were several.

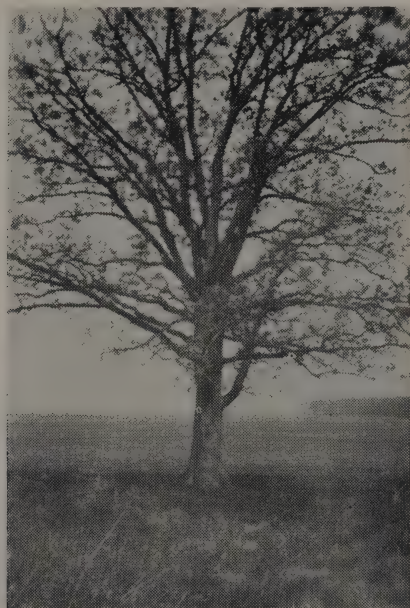


In the early part of the summer of 1861, Pastor Jensen, temporary minister of the churches, St. Olaf, Rock Dell, and Bear Creek held con-

firmation when several from Bear Creek were among the ones taking the confirmation vow.

### Rev. C. L. Clausen

The first servant of God in the Bear Creek Community was Rev. C. L. Clausen who lived at St. Ansgar, Iowa. Scores of congregations in northern Iowa and southern Minnesota owe their existence to this untiring servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Overcoming all the obstacles in his way, he travelled from community to community administering the Holy Sacraments and preaching the word of God. His many travels led him also to the little immigrant colony on the banks of the Bear Creek and here on that memorable 22nd day of June, 1856, the message of the Cross was heard for the first time. These services were held at the home of Ole Simonson Jobraaten. During the delivery of the sermon the pastor stood under the spreading branches of a young burr



oak tree. On the farm of Sever Temanson, somewhat apart from the others of its kind. This tree is still standing like a Silent Sentinel, guarding the Hallowed Memories of the Past.



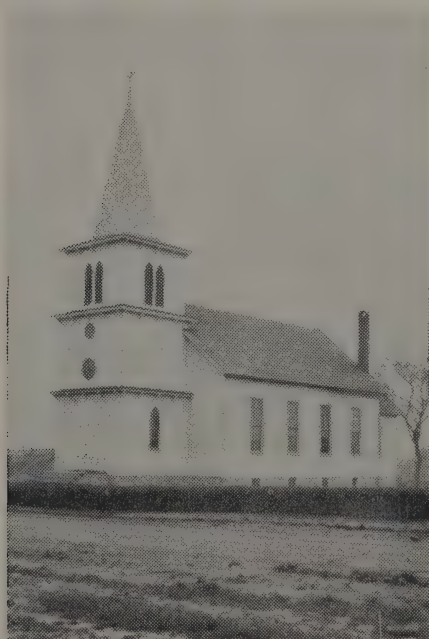
Rev. Clausen immigrated to America in 1843. Just before their departure from their native land his gifted wife composed the beautiful and soul-stirring hymn, "Saa Vil Nu Sig Hverandre Farvel." (Landstads Salmebok, Nr. 93).

### **Building of the Church**

Not only did the early pioneers wish for land and the erection of a dwelling or a place to live, but they were also anxious to start the building of a church or a place of worship.

The first was to choose a site for the building. It was suggested to build near the school house or near Aslak Aamodt, or west of Halvor Weeks' house by the new road, but the new road was never made.

To decide the location for the church, voluntary donations were asked for and to what site the donor preferred. The site getting the biggest subscribed sum should be the one chosen



and that was by Halvor Week's. This site could not be used when the new road was uncertain, so at a meeting at the school house, Dec. 6, 1869, the land given by Ole Finhart was chosen. The building committee was A. K. Aamodt, Amund J. Lindlien, Amund Finhart and Lars G. Modalen-Hanson.

The dimensions of the church were 50 feet long, 34 feet wide and 18 feet high. Halsten Arneson was to be the architect. The building of the church was done in 1869-1870.

To get the first money for their treasury the settlers gave the money received from the wheat raised on an acre of land, some gave only the wheat from one-half acre of land.

When building was to begin every settler had to haul either lumber or stones. The first load was to be hauled gratis but after that they were to receive 75c per hundred feet of lumber and \$1.00 a load for stones. Everyone worked with enthusiasm and vim.



The main church was built first. No pews as yet, only some benches.

The steeple was a problem the settlers did not want to do, so Mr. Bogseth from Rochester built it in June 1873.

The chancel was built in 1886. The dimensions are 20 ft. by 18 feet. Ole A. Berg built it, receiving eighty dollars for his labors. Then Berg made the pulpit, altar and altar railing and the Ladies Aid paid for them. Later, Berg made the railing for the balcony.

When the church was first built, they could not decide how



to finish the inside of it so a committee was appointed to go to Albert Lea to see Mr. Ole Syverud for suggestions.

The church was painted by Ole O. Galen. He did the work, painted it two coats and furnished the material for the sum of ninety dollars.

The Ladies Aid donated the money for the first steps to the entrance of the church. The committee to make the steps was: L. G. Hanson, J. H. J. Week, and Tollef Presterud.

All of the pews were made by Berg and Presterud.

On the twelfth of June, 1887, the church was brought to such a state of perfection that it could be dedicated, and on the day mentioned the dedication service was held with great joy for old and young, the dedicatory sermon being delivered by Prof. M. O. Bockman, assisted by Prof. F. A. Schmidt of St. Paul, and Rev. O. A. Bue.

During the time that Rev Belsheim served the congregation it was thought that either a room be built to the church or a basement be made. It was voted to make the basement. The committee in charge of it was Rev. O. G. Belsheim, Sever Temanson, C. C. Skogstad, G. Gilbertson and A. G. Dalen. The committee for the arrangements for the dedication of the basement was Sven Isaacson, C. C. Skogstad and Borger Anderson. The congregation decided to allot every member to get its debt paid off. Mr. Isaacson said he was willing to lend the congregation the necessary sum of money they needed without interest and on an unlimited time. It was a great help to the congregation.

Every congregation must have its "City of the Dead," so also in Bear Creek. Ole Simonson Jobraaten donated to the congregation a piece of land to be used as a place of burial. This was located on the farm of Sever Temanson, a little to the southwest of the giant burr oak.

The first burial in this cemetery was that of Anders Torhang, who died of over-exertion in trying to drive a pair of young steers. The second person buried here was Erland Brufat, the aged father of Gullik Dalen. Ole Simonson Jobraaten, who played such an important part in the early history of the community, passed away in 1864, and was laid to rest in this cemetery. This cemetery was abandoned in 1870 after forty-one burials had taken place within its borders. In that year the



Bear Creek Church was built, and around it was formed a new and beautiful place of burial.

In 1928 a number of families, desiring to perpetuate the memory of the first pioneers of the community, erected on the site of the old cemetery a beautiful monument bearing the following inscription:

To the Memory of  
The First Norwegian Lutheran  
Pioneers of Bear Creek  
41 Buried  
1856 - 1870

The monument was dedicated by Rev. John Ritland of Spring Valley in June, 1928.

The land on the east side of the church was purchased by Sever Olsen Skalshaugen and he gave it to the congregation as part of the cemetery. The land on the South and West of the church was bought from Ole Finhart. In 1876 the cemetery was staked out in grave-size lots, but changed later. In the spring of 1884 a committee, consisting of seven men were to stake out the cemetery into lots, but in 1891 the same committee obtained the help of the County surveyor.

For several years the late Sever Temanson had visited the cemetery very often and written the number of the lot and the number of graves on the lots in some school composition books. He knew these books would soon be destroyed, so, at

the yearly meeting in 1923, he suggested a committee be appointed to start a record of interments. They were: Sever Temanson, C. C. Skogstad, and Emil Skogstad; Mertie Lindelien to do the writing.

The first steel vault that was lowered in the Bear Creek cemetery was in the fall of 1920 for A. G. Dalen. The first concrete vault that was lowered was for Sigward Lybeck in 1943.

### **Rev. A. E. Friederichsen**

From 1856 to 1858 Bear Creek congregation was occasionally served by Rev. A. E. Frederichsen. He was born in Norway in 1810. Traveling from settlement to settlement clad in sheepskin clothing, he was generally known as the "Sheepskin Preacher."

### **Rev. A. C. Preus**

From May, 1858 until some time in 1859 the Rock Dell and Bear Creek congregations were occasionally served by Rev. A. C. Preus who was located at Koshkonong, Wis. He was born at Trondhjem, Norway. After serving for five years as a teacher and pastor in Norway, he had come to America in 1850.

### **Rev. N. E. S. Jensen**

Rev. N. E. S. Jensen served as temporary pastor from 1859 to 1861. He was then located near Rushford.



### **Rev. L. Steen**

The Revs. Clausen, Frederichsen, Preus and Jensen all served as temporary pastors. The first regularly called pastor of Bear Creek congregation was Rev. Steen. Coming to America in 1861, he received ordination on a call from Rock Dell and Bear Creek.





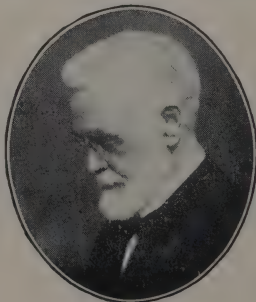
Rev. Steen was by natural disposition or bringing up in an aristocratic family, a stranger to the character of the common Norwegian people. He didn't try to become intimately acquainted with the church members or in any fashion attempted to gain their friendship or social relation, but always in an official superiority commanded. He showed this disposition as well when he ordered a woman to bring

him a cup of coffee or brush his clothes, as when he presided at a church business meeting, and for the least little act by his parishioners that didn't suit his notions, he lost his patience and calm temper and broke out in intemperate language. Many of his most earnest and faithful church supporting members lost their love for him.

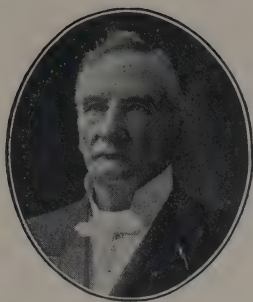
In the crisis of the strained conditions between Rev. Steen and his congregation, a Swedish Methodist preacher began to hold meetings and he was able to turn several families and individuals in favor of his church. At one time 15 families of the settlement joined the Methodist congregation. Most of them were members on probation. Rev. Bjork, that was the preacher. His congregation was nearly all Norwegians and he being an uneducated Swede was not able to modify his Swedish language to properly impressive figures in language. He was a forceful and enterprising man and soon had a small church and parsonage built on the corner one-half mile west of the Bear Creek church. The Methodist Conference of Minnesota was not willing to abandon the little church, and sent several able preachers who could speak the Norwegian language intelligently, but the church could not be redeemed or advanced. The Lutheran Church had by this time discharged Rev. Steen, and in his place was the able and efficient Rev. Jorgen Thorsen.

#### **Rev. J. A. Thorsen**

Rev. Thorsen served the congregation every 5th Sunday from 1869 to 1875. It was during his ministry that the Bear Creek church was built, in the year 1870. He had thus left a lasting memorial in our midst, as a result of his splendid leadership in the church.



### Rev. Olav A. Bue



Rev. Olav Bue was born in Norway on January 19th, 1842. He finished the theological course at the University of Christiania in 1874. The following year he came to the United States and was ordained on a call from Bloomfield, LeRoy and Bear Creek congregations. To these were later added West LeRoy and Bennington. He preached occasionally also in Grand Meadow. In Bear Creek he had services every third Sunday. In all kinds of weather, unmindful of his own comfort, he administered to those who called him as their shepherd.

### S. O. Rondestvedt

By the beginning of the nineties the Bear Creek Congregation had grown from the feeble beginnings to a membership of nearly six hundred souls. Family after family had come to the settlement, some from Wisconsin and others from Norway. The Lutherans in Grand Meadow had decided to organize a congregation. So the feeling began to be prevalent, that Bear Creek should sever its union with the Bloomfield charge and join with Grand Meadow in calling a resident pastor.

This change was made in 1893. Rev. Bue resigned his pastorate in Bear Creek to devote all his time to LeRoy and Bloomfield Congregations.

A call was sent to Rev. S. O. Rondestvedt of Brookings, South Dakota. He accepted, and took up the work in his new charge in October 1893. A new period in the history of the Bear Creek community had begun.

The first residential pastor in Bear Creek was Rev. Rondestvedt and family. At a church meeting it was an unanimous vote to build a house or parsonage for them. The congregation voted to build for about twelve hundred dollars. Then a discussion followed—would the basement be included in that sum of twelve hundred dollars or would it only be the house on top of the basement. It was decided the house and basement belong together to make a house. The

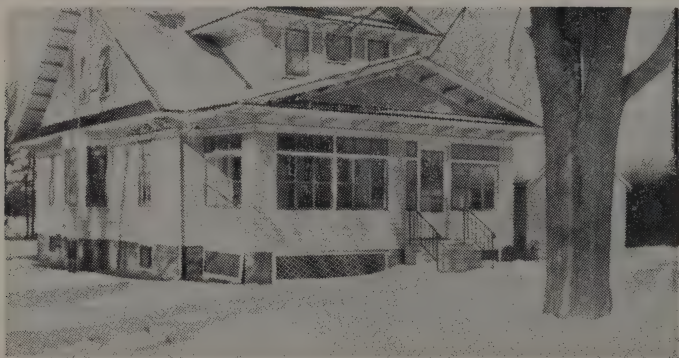


building committee was G. Gilbertson, C. C. Skogstad, A. G. Dalen, O. A. Berg and Halsten Kval. Other members of the congregation helped by hauling material necessary for the build-



ing. To build a parsonage fifty acres of land was bought from T. O. Sween, (the place now owned by H. H. Hanson).

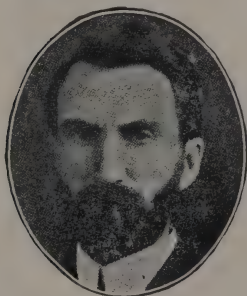
The parsonage in the country was sold to Sanford Week



in 1929, and the Ole Gunderson residence in Grand Meadow was purchased for a parsonage and is occupied as such at the present time.

### **Rev. O. G. Belsheim**

In the summer of 1901 Rev. Rondesvædt moved to the western coast. He was succeeded by Rev. O. G. Belsheim the following October. Rev. Belsheim served the two congregations until the fall of 1907. During his pastorate, the new church was built at Grand Meadow.





### **Rev. A. H. Gjevre**

Rev. Belsheim was succeeded by Rev. A. H. Gjevre, who served from October 1907 to June 1913.

Rev. Gjevre was a great student of Oriental languages and wrote and translated many books.



### **Rev. H. C. M. Jahren**

The eleventh pastor of Bear Creek Congregation was Rev. H. C. M. Jahren, who served for a period of fifteen years, 1913-1928.

Rev. Jahren was the first American born pastor of the Congregation. After he left Grand Maedow he was pastor of the Old Muskego Parish, Waterford, Wisconsin, the oldest parish in our church body.



### **Rev. John Ritland**

From Easter 1928 to Easter 1929, the charge was temporarily served by Rev. John Ritland, pastor of the Spring Valley and Stewartville Congregations.



### **Rev. J. C. Thompson**

Joseph Christian Thompson, the thirteenth pastor of Bear Creek Congregation, was born at Iron River, Wisconsin, January 17, 1889. Losing his mother in infancy, he found a loving Christian home with the parents of his mother, at Woodville, Wisc. After spending two years at the High School in Woodville, Wis., he attended St. Olaf College for six years, graduating



in 1921. He attended the Luther Theological Seminary at St. Paul, graduating in 1924.

Before coming to Bear Creek he served as a pastor at Borup, Minn., from 1924 to 1929.

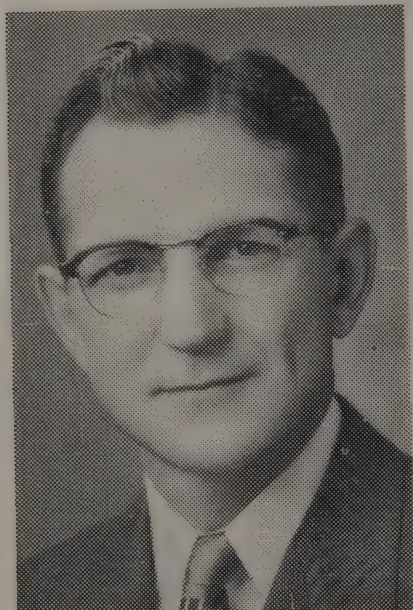
At Bear Creek he was at the head of the seventy-fifth Anniversary and the ninetieth Anniversary.

#### **Rev. J. N. Skepstad**

On July 15, 1948, a call letter was sent to Rev. John Skepstad and he accepted and served until 1952. He organized the Luther League into two separate groups, Senior and Junior Leagues. Young people from both the churches met together at Grand Meadow. He also led the choir besides his ministerial work.



The time between Rev. Skepstad's leaving and Rev. Holland's arrival, was served by Rev. Olaf Brevik and Rev. Jacob Tveten, both of Albert Lea, Minn.



#### **Rev. Eugene V. Holland**

Rev. Holland came from Granite Falls, Minn., to Bear Creek and was installed May 10, 1953, by Dr. E. C. Reinertson. He is the present pastor.

#### **THE LADIES AID**

The first organization started in the Bear Creek Congregation was the Ladies Aid. It was organized at the Ole A. Linde-

lien home on Sunday, March 8th, 1885, with a charter membership of twenty-nine women.

Mr. Gunnar Halvorson, a teacher in the community at the time, was the chairman of the meeting, and Mr. Ole E. Loe was the secretary. He lived on and owned the farm now occupied by Merle Jacobson. The two men wrote the first constitution.

The first officers were as follows: President, Beret Aamodt; Secretary, Mrs. O. A. Lindelien; and Treasurer, Mrs. Herman Hovda, Sr.

Being 1955 marked the Seventieth Anniversary of the Ladies Aid, the members of the Aid were invited to the Lindelien home for the August meeting, as Mrs. Lindelien is the only Charter Member living and at her home the Aid was organized. A very appropriate program was arranged by the present Aid officers, both as an anniversary celebration and tribute to the charter member.

To get the first money in their treasury each charter member donated twenty-five cents. From this sum of money, material was bought and various garments were made to be sold at a bazaar. At the first meetings held they met in the forenoon in order that more work might be accomplished. A big dinner was served at noon. Five cents was paid at each meeting. Though the sums taken in at the meetings were small the Lord blessed them so the Ladies Aid always had a liberal sum to give to missions and other departments of the general church.

The Ladies Aid worked with great enthusiasm to see the church started and then completed. Besides the contributions to the general church work, they bought and donated to the home church.

The first thing they bought was the church bell in the year 1886. The bell was made by the Buckeye Bell Foundry and sold by the Vanduzen-Teft Co., of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The verse on the bell reads as follows:

NORWEGIAN . . .

Min tilvarelse fik av kvinderne  
Der for kalder jeg med stemme saa s d  
Kom, Kom sog din Gud arme snyder  
Thi snart jeg forkynder din dod.



## ENGLISH TRANSLATION . . .

My existence I owe to the ladies  
That is why I call with voice so sweet  
Come, come seek your Lord poor sinner  
Because soon I will announce your death.

Emma Aamodt, a sister of Mrs. G. T. Torgrimson was the first one the bell tolled for.

J. H. J. Week thought it best a general treasurer for all three aids be elected and Ole Finhart was elected. The auditors for the Ladies Aids money were L. G. Hanson, J. H. J. Week and Jens Brager.

The second of April the same spring the aid was organized, they had their first bazaar at the Hans Simonson-Jobraaten home.

The ladies made several very pretty pieced quilts. They made three embroidered quilts, not at the same time. The one was made of white material cut into nine inch squares. A little design was embroidered in red on each square and also one or more names were outlined. All designs were different. Numbers were sold to designate the winner and Martha Røndestvedt won the quilt. The second quilt was made of red and white material. The material was cut into squares nine inches, red names were worked on the white squares and white names on the red squares. Numbers were sold on this quilt too and Ed Haugen won it. Mrs. Simon Severson wrote all the names to be embroidered on the second quilt. A cost of five cents was asked to have a name put on the quilt. The third embroidered quilt was presented Rev. and Mrs. Belsheim. The older ladies did a lot of knitting for the bazaars. Mostly stockings were knit.

The altar painting was done by Mr. Berg, a resident of Decorah, Iowa, at that time. The painting cost seventy-five dollars.

After the congregation had raised the church and the basement was made, the Ladies Aid bought various things to supply the basement room so that it might serve as both kitchen and dining room. For the dinner served in the basement, the ladies had to bring dishes, silverware, and different cooking utensils. A few years later the Ladies Aid decided to put in the partition making a kitchen and dining room. Two long tables

were made, cupboards built, and dishes bought.

The means of transportation was not as convenient in the early days of the Aid as it is now in our present day, since cars have become so common. It was soon necessary to divide the Aid into three groups, making it easier for all to attend the Aid meetings. The west district was all the families west of the township line between Frankford and Grand Meadow and Guri Haugerstuen and daughters included. The central district was the ones north of the road going east and west by the church and Mrs. Ole Finhart included. The east group was the ones east of the Sween residence.

The three groups continued to work each for themselves, but all for the same cause until in 1917 when they started work together again at the church basement. They did Red Cross work under the Red Cross Chapter of Austin, Minnesota, during World War I. Since the time mentioned the ladies have worked together. After the war was over they decided to continue working together and meet regularly once a month at the church parlors. Mrs. C. E. Hovda was the president of this Aid. They met every third Wednesday of the month.

At one of the last meetings in the year 1929 it was decided that the ladies be divided into three groups and meet at the homes during the winter months. They do such work, as making quilts, children's clothes, layettes and such articles as they see fit to be used at Charitable Institutions. The three groups are known as the East Mission Circle, the West Mission Circle, and Mission Circle No. 3.

As a rule the first Ladies Aid meeting of the year is mostly the third Wednesday in April and at this meeting the chairman of the Circles report the work they have done during the past winter.

Back as far as 1930 it was decided that a program be given at each meeting. At one program Mrs. K. G. Nelson gave a very interesting biography of Mrs. Gabriel Kjelland of Stavanger, Norway. Mrs. Kjelland was the founder of the Ladies Aid movement in 1840. The little incident in Mrs. Kjelland's life shows what can be accomplished when love for the cause is the driving power. From a little group of four women the Ladies Aid has grown and spread to all civilized countries, even to our mission fields.

In the fall of 1930 the first fruit barrel was packed and

sent to the Ebenezer Old People's Home. Since then a barrel of canned fruit has been sent to a different institution of charity every year. Usually at the October meetings, we had "Guest Day" and "Bazaar."

In 1940 we joined the "Cradle Roll." There were fifteen names to start with. A Cradle Roll secretary is appointed by the president of the Aid.

Two delegates are voted on by the Aid to go as our representatives to the conventions and conferences of the W.M.F. A report by the delegates is as a rule read at the first Aid meeting after the convention or conference is held.

From 1907 to 1921 the price for Aid lunches had been fifteen cents, but with a unanimous vote it was raised to twenty-five cents.

It was decided to give a W.M.F. Life Membership to the charter members of the Aid. On August 15, 1945, a very interesting playlet was given to explain what is meant by a Life Membership. Mrs. Ole A. Lindelien was presented the first certificate given by the Bear Creek Aid. After the charter members have received their Life Membership Certificates it is to be given to the past presidents beginning with the oldest ones first. To date, thirty-one Life Membership pins have been given. Mrs. Marvin Skustad was the first Life Membership secretary appointed by the president of the Aid.

A Mother and Daughter Banquet was sponsored by the Aid June 12th, 1948, and June 10th, 1949, a Father and Son Banquet was sponsored and another Mother and Daughter Banquet in June 1950.

The first Lutefisk Supper the Aid had ever put on was November 8, 1949. Weather and roads were very favorable, so it was the biggest success the Aid had ever achieved. It was a success both as to attendance and from a financial standpoint. There has been six "Lutefisk Suppers" since.

They have had several bake sales. An ice cream social was put on mostly in July, but the last years a dinner has been served at the church basement on Decoration Day, instead.

Before Rev. Holland and family came the Ladies Aid re-decorated the parsonage and re-modeled the kitchen. At the end of the year the business is balanced, two officers are elected, followed by donations to various activities of the church, such as:



Student Scholarship  
Lutheran Student Foundation  
American Bible Society  
Madison Old Peoples Home  
Kenyon Sunset Home  
Green Lake Bible Camp  
Lake Park—Wild Rice Children's Home  
Literature and Promotion  
World Action, Lutheran Welfare  
Pension Appeal, Seaman's Mission  
Thank Offering.

### THE BEAR CREEK BAND

The Bear Creek Band was organized June 14, 1889, on a rainy Sunday afternoon to supply an outlet for the exceptional musical talent that existed in the pioneer colony.

The initial organization meeting of the group was held at the home of C. C. Skogstad, now the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Jorgens. Sixteen members made up this group of band-minded farm boys that sat in the hay mow and made plans for the band that was to figure so prominently in the history of this community and area. Probably never has a musical organization established such a remarkable record for longevity of its members and persistence of effort as has the Normana Brass Band of the Bear Creek Community.

The first band leader was Alfred Stewart of Grand Meadow, receiving a dollar for each rehearsal. Then A. H. Lee was the first member of the band to be the leader.

Their first public appearance was at Wells, Minn., at a G.A.R. Convention. After that they played for various occasions and places. They were at the State Fair in 1939 and 1943.

For several years the band sponsored a picnic. A very interesting program was arranged for, and a baseball game then followed. Refreshments could be had on the ground. These picnics were held on the Torkelson farm near where they had their band hall.

At the picnic in 1924 the Seventieth Anniversary of the landing of the "Pioneer Settlers" was observed. Rev. J. C. K. Preus was the speaker. His mother was there also and she spoke a few words, having come to America on the same boat as the Bear Creek settlers, who came in 1861.

In 1925 the band donated the "hedge" by the church, and in 1928 they gave two Communion trays to the church in memory of C. C. Skogstad. Then in 1953 another tray was added in memory of Olaus Simonson.

## THE BEAR CREEK LUTHER LEAGUE

The Bear Creek Luther League was organized by Rev. Rondestvedt the 31st of December, 1893. Their first officers were Rev. Rondestvedt, president; O. Tande, vice president; Torval Torgrimson, secretary; vice secretary, Bertha Nelson; treasurer, Mattie Aamoth-Torgrimson. Their programs consisted of music, Bible study, readings, addresses and songs by their League Choir.

In October, 1895, Anna Ostegaard-Peterson and E. Erickson were delegates to a Luther League Convention in Decorah, Iowa. Minutes show this League was in existence until 1897.

The Bear Creek League was re-organized in the spring of 1908. Rev. Gjivre and Mr. Eckholdt, a student from Decorah, Iowa, who taught Bible school in the different school districts of the parish.

The League meetings were held on Sunday afternoon when the church had been heated for services. The lighting was not so good so day light was considered best. The programs consisted of readings and musical selections by the young people.

For a while the League did not do well, but Rev. Jahren revived it when he came.

He re-organized the League and it became a very interesting organization. The programs opened with the evening services found in the hymnary. The Church Herald had outlines for the discussion of League topics. These were followed and musical selections were arranged for at every meeting. The pastor or other speakers were asked to appear on the program also. During the summer months we would exchange programs with the neighboring Leagues. We had a social meeting usually on New Years Eve to wake out the old year, and another one during the summer.

The League worked for electric lights for the church. In 1923 a birthday social was given, everybody paid for their supper according to their age. Many were hundred years, though they had not reached that mark, they hoped to.

The next event was a waist-line social in 1929. Everybody paid for their supper according to their waist measurement. The Delco lights were installed in the church in 1923.

The League helped pay for the well, and pay towards the new carpet, and install one of the colored windows.

When the R.E.A. came through, the League sold the Delco plant and the proceeds were paid towards the change of lights. The League paid for the organ that later was given to Allen Lee. Rev. Thompson dedicated the organ at a League program on Sunday, April 19, 1931.

### **LUTHERAN BROTHERHOOD**

Rev. Jahren organized the Men's Club or Lutheran Brotherhood. This organization had regular meetings and programs for a number of years, but has not functioned now for some years. They cleaned and put up the monument on the old cemetery.

### **THE DORCAS GIRLS SOCIETY**

Rev. Jahren deserves credit for the organization of one more group, the Dorcas Girls Society. The girls were busy sewing articles for their bazaar and also sewed for the purpose of remembering the ones less fortunate than we are in a temporal way, the Dorcas Society meaning a worker for the needy. The girls later married or left for some vocation, so the society soon was abandoned. This society bought new carpet in the chancel, painted the interior of the church and varnished the woodwork and bought one of the stained glass windows. Rev. Thompson organized the L.D.R., a follow-up of the Dorcas. They made and sent things to the Alaska Mission, as the L.D.R., is a mission society.

### **BEAR CREEK CHOIR**

The Bear Creek Choir was organized in the year 1888, in the school house across the road from the present home of the Anderson Brothers. The organizer was John Rude, who also was the first director.

After Rude there were other directors—C. C. Skogstad, H. G. Hanson, and Olaus Simonson. When Rev. Jahren came, he re-organized the choir and also directed and worked with the choir. He took the choir to several of the neighboring churches giving concerts and receiving free will offerings for which the



choir bought the piano in the church. In 1932 the choir went to Owatonna to appear on the program of the District convention of the Young Peoples Luther League.

Olaus Simonson directed the choir during Rev. Thompson's stay here.

Rev. Skepstad directed the choir while he was here and now Rev. Holland is directing it, having rehearsals once a week.

## ANNIVERSARIES

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the church was celebrated in 1906. The program committee was: Belsheim, L. G. Hanson, and Nils Julson, O. O. Florand, Arne Anderson, S. Temanson and B. Anderson.

In 1931 the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary was observed. The festivities opened on Friday evening with a sermon preached by Rev. H. C. M. Jahren. Saturday morning the 84th Psalm was introduced by the President of the Austin Circuit, Rev. Olaf Brevik of Ostrander. The discussion continued throughout the afternoon. Sunday forenoon a Norwegian sermon was delivered by S. O. Rondestvedt of Westby, Wis., and the English sermon by Dr. T. F. Gullixson, then the President of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. Sunday afternoon there were greetings from the pastors present and a heart-searching address by Dr. Gullixson on the subject "Christ the Mender of Broken Men." Music was furnished by the Bear Creek Choir, the Bear Creek Band, and the Saetersdal Choir.

The Ninetieth Anniversary — In June, 1946, a large crowd gathered at the Bear Creek Lutheran Church when the congregation observed its ninetieth anniversary. The outstanding feature of the event was a series of three stirring messages by Dr. N. M. Ylvisaker of Minneapolis, president of the U.S. Army and Navy Chaplain Association. At the afternoon session, Rev. Thompson read letters of greetings from former pastors, from Southern Minnesota District President, Dr. J. A. Aasgaard, Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Personal greetings were brought by Rev. E. R. Weeks of Hayfield, whose grandparents were pioneer members of Bear Creek. Marvin Seim represented the daughter Congregation at Grand Meadow, and Supt. George Skustad of Virginia, Minn., who is one of the sons of the Bear Creek congregation.

After the evening session, refreshments were served by the

Luther League group.

## SCHOOLS

Every family had instruction for their own children at home, and did what they could to give their children a religious education, as "Religious Instruction" was one of their main aims. The first mention of schools was what was known as "om-gangs skole," the teacher going around from place to place conducting school for a week at a time at the home of different settlers.

One of the earlier teachers to come to this new community was Mr. Myhrberg. He taught Bible school, preached sermons on Sundays and had catechization of the children in the absence of the pastor. For his services he wanted fifty-two dollars a year or one dollar from each farmer in the congregation.

At a meeting of the congregation a committee was chosen to gather funds to pay the teacher and also hire more teachers. The committee was as follows: Aslak Aamodt, Ole Boe, Erik Oimoen, E. O. Hovda, Ole Viker. The first hired was John J. Kaas. He taught school, was secretary for the congregation, and general assistant to the pastor. Mr. Kaas was a very good penman and a good student in Arithmetic. To help the people past the confirmation age he had night school in the log school house two or three evenings a week and taught writing and Arithmetic. He also served on several committees. The other teachers were Berg, Bo, N. Bondlie, Halvorson, and Fjelde. In 1880 it was decided to hire teachers that could give instructions in both Norwegian and English languages. When school districts were organized and school houses built, school in the homes was abandoned.

Through the years there were some of the men of the settlement that taught Bible school besides the ones hired from other places. They were Arne T. Boen, Ole Loe, Ole Tande.

The first money subscribed for the budget (samfund kassen) was in 1879.

The first janitor for the Bear Creek Church was Mr. Skrukkelien. In 1873 Nels C. Finbraaten became the janitor. His salary was six dollars a year and he was to furnish the wood for the stoves. Finbraaten was janitor for several years. In 1887 his wages had been raised to thirty dollars a year.

Other janitors and sextons of the church were Borger An-

derson, Stefen Anderson, Sven Isaacson, O. Rondestvedt (father of Rev. Rondestvedt), Ole Sween, Emil Skogstad, Ole Skogstad, Mr. Smestad, Mr. Kofad, and H. H. Hanson.

It used to be the custom in the Norwegian Synod to have an assistant in the church, who was known as a "Klokker." The person who held this position represented the congregation in a special way. He gave opening and closing prayers at services, spoke the "Amens" at baptismal rites and assisted the pastor in various ways. In the days before church organs came into use he also led the congregation in hymn singing (hence the name kirkesager), a "Klokker" and "Church Singer."

The first klokker in Bear Creek was Johanes Week, Sr., (father of Mrs. Guri Lindelien of Racine, and Tillie Week of Lake Crystal). Other klokkers were Erik Severson Oimoen, Arne T. Boen, John Kass, Gunnar Halvorson, O. Tande, H. G. Hanson, Ole Gunderson, Edward Simonson, and Borger Anderson.

The first organist was Miss Oliana Brager (Mrs. O. Tande), and since then the following have had the position: Gabriel Torgrimson, Josephine Finhart (Mrs. Otto Olson), Hannah Julson (Mrs. Elvin Florand), Rosella Dalen, Mariæ Gjevre, Mertie Lindelien, Ona Simonson-Strom, Mabel Simonson-Skogstad, Sophia Skaran (Mrs. Elgar Hovda), Adele Simonson (Mrs. Lars Wahl).

Sunday School was organized June 11, 1892. H. G. Hanson was elected superintendent and Steffin Anderson, Vice-Superintendent. The Sunday School board was H. G. Hanson, A. G. Dalen and Ole Tande. H. G. Hanson was superintendent until 1907. Then there were several to have the position: O. Tande, Mertie Lindelien, S. Temanson, Ona Simonson-Strom, Ella Lindelien, Olyne Simonson, Sophia Skaran-Hovda, Elgar Hovda, H. H. Hanson, Mrs. Lars Wahl, and Mrs. Wesley Root.

The first Christmas tree in Bear Creek was the Christmas of 1894.

In March 1879 Bear Creek received a letter from Rev. K. Magelsen to join the Fillmore Circuit and before it was decided to accept that invitation, we had a letter from Hayward to join that Circuit. We joined the latter which became the Austin Circuit. The first Circuit meeting held in Bear Creek was in November 1894. The theme for discussion was Eph. 5:14.

In 1895 the hymn books were changed from Synode to Landstads.



The first church auditors were Hans Brager, J. H. J. Week, and John Skyberg.

The first ushers for the church were Carl Skustad and Martin Sorum.

The minutes of the church meetings were written in the Norwegian language to the year 1923.

In the summer of 1927 lightning struck the steeple of the church. Not much damage was done. The steeple was lowered a little and the Cross put on.

At a special meeting in 1936 the motion was made to strike out the word "male" from paragraph fifteen of the by-laws of the church so that it shall read "all members over twenty-one years of age can vote."

The first mail the early settlers received was in 1860. A stagecoach route was established between Rochester, Minnesota, and Decorah, Iowa, and they brought the mail to the residence of Mr. and Mrs. B. F. Langworthy (where Mr. and Mrs. Leon Kelly now live). Their kitchen was the Post Office. The first leader of the Bear Creek Band was also the first rural mail carrier from Grand Meadow, so he again served the Bear Creek community.

In 1893 the following families left Bear Creek and joined the church in Grand Meadow: J. J. Week, E. E. Myhre, Christian Hovda, Anton Hovda, and John Lindelien. Then in 1901 several families from Frankford joined Bear Creek.

In 1951 the constitution of the church was revised and adopted as revised.

The Grand Meadow congregation voted to build a new church. Then they decided to invite Bear Creek to merge with them. They sent us an invitation in form of a resolution. November 27, 1953, a special meeting was held at Bear Creek to consider the invitation. There were discussions for merging and some spoke against. A committee was chosen to go to Grand Meadow to get a better understanding about the merging. On December 8, 1953, another meeting was held at Bear Creek to hear the report of the committee and to vote. The majority of votes were against merging.

At the regular yearly meeting of the church in January 1955, the general business was transacted and a committee of five were elected to start working for our Centennial Festivities

in June 1956. The committee were Edmund Hanson, Ole Isaacson, Mrs. Elvin Hanson, Mrs. Marvin Skustad, and Mertie Lindelien.

#### CHURCH OFFICERS:

Chairman, Marvin Skaran

Secretary, Albert Ringen

Treasurer, Elmer Hoeft

Historian, Mertie Lindelien



This completes our brief skeleton history of the early settlement of the Bear Creek Norwegian colony with dates and figures of incidents in our possession. It is mostly compiled from personal recollection of the writers and other old persons yet living who at the early days were young children or youths. A comparatively full history of the development of this colony up to the present date would make a large and interesting history.

We will return to a few remarks about the hard struggles of the first years in the settlement. Nearly all the colonists were without money sufficient to insure them against great suffering during the first years before they could raise grain for bread and this condition was general among all settlers of all nationalities in the territory. Our Norwegian settlers were all young and strong people and able and willing to work, but could find little or no employment for pay.

It must be understood that the first great necessity for all the settlers or homesteaders was to build shelters for themselves to live in and some kind of hovels for their domestic animals. It was, also, necessary to get as many acres of ground broke the first summer as possible so as to enable them to grow something for food the next year. The settlers brought their steers together and put 4, 5, or 6 pairs together in a string. This string they called breaking teams. In this way each and all got a patch of an acre or few acres broke. Many of the settlers were so poor that they didn't own a yoke of steers, but those who had oxen broke a patch for them.

Nearly all the men settlers traveled far and near in search of work the first winter, but seldom found a chance to work for any kind of money compensation. It is well known to the writers that strong and young men considered it a great luck to find a

chance to cut and split rails and cut cord wood a whole day for 25 to 50 cents, and some of them had to walk 6 miles in the morning to the work and of course that same distance back to their homes in the evening.

During the first winter there was a general scarcity of flour or meal for bread. One woman told the writer that as far as she knew, there was not so much wheat for flour in the settlement that a loaf of bread could be baked. In this flour famine Ole Finhart undertook to drive to Decorah, Iowa, with his yoke of oxen to buy flour, but there was not one pound to be gotten. All he could get was a sack of corn meal, and this sack was divided among the destitute families.

The settlers of mixed nationalities among and about the Norwegian colonists were mostly all as poor in money wealth as the Norwegians. None hired men or women for money wages. Kari Hovda, later Mrs. Ole Finhart, told often that she worked several months for an American family in the new village Frankford without any compensation except her board—said she was glad to get board. After a couple of years girls as kitchen servants were paid from 50 cents to one dollar and fifty cents a week and it may be added that these servant girls were used or rather abused by their employers as slaves or beasts of burden. A hired girl was janitor, water carrier, clothes washer, floor scrubber, house cleaner, nurse, and in some houses she had to calcimine rooms with lime mixture. Her hours of work were not limited to a certain number of hours but in most cases she had to get out of bed at four o'clock in the morning and work till late in the night, often till 12 in the night. Her bedroom was never heated. In some homes she had to sleep in a rustic bedstead in the garret where snow often drifted in and covered her bed cover. It was an exception to the rule if a Norwegian hired girl was allowed to mix with the Yankee family in the sitting room except when she had to come in to work. She was not permitted to serve the family at the table. She was only allowed into the door of the dining room with the food she had cooked or prepared. There she was met by the lady of the house or some other appointed or privileged lady waiter who took the food from her hands and served it. These conditions lasted for more than ten years. The Norwegian girls and her parents had to submit to these hardships and indignities on account of poverty, but it was often expressed by parents of the



poor girls, "If we were not so penniless and hard up, we would rather have our daughters feed pigs and milk cows than to be degraded servants of the Yankees."

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the cost of cotton goods rose to fabulous prices. A yard of calico cost as high as 50 cents. This rise in the price of cotton goods made the life of a working girl desperate. Her weekly wages did not rise with prices on her most necessary wearing apparel. She never received more than two dollars a week and she had to be a very competent and able girl to get two dollars. Most of them had to work for the old wages, one dollar or one dollar and fifty cents.

The second winter in the Bear Creek settlement, 1855 and 1856, nearly all the men population went down the Mississippi River toward Rock Island, Illinois, and into the woods to cut cord wood. They all found work and got fair pay. It was a lucky venture. They worked till late in the spring and returned to Bear Creek with their hard earned savings. This relieved the money stringency for all the families in connection with the wood choppers and most of these and others with them repeated the enterprise the next winter.

At this time the Bear Creek settlers began to have some farm products to sell. Wheat grew abundantly on their few acres of breaking. The herd had increased in cows, oxen and sheep. The food shortage had at this time disappeared.

The great question now was a marketing place for what farm products they could sell. There were no railroads in Minnesota at this time and the nearest steamboat station was Winona on the Mississippi River, and the distance from Bear Creek to Winona was about 60 miles. Roads to Winona there were none, and no bridges, so to get there with a yoke of oxen before a primitive lumber wagon with a load of wheat on was a perilous and slow undertaking. If rain had softened the ground, it often took the ox teamster two weeks to reach Winona and back home. During the winter season a journey of this kind was impossible. It could only be done during the bare ground season.

The price of a bushel of wheat at this time was about 50 cents and the pay was generally in merchandise at the stores owned by the wheat buyer. The nominal price of the wheat was not governed by a continental or world's market, but by the

speculative notion of the grain buyer, and the price of goods in the stores on which the farmer had his order was just as arbitrary in the opposite direction as on the wheat. The goods were always of job lot qualities such as could not be sold in the market in eastern towns and cities. As an example to illustrate this, the writer will state his own experience. In the summer of 1861, I bought a pair of heavy, low, split leather shoes, and paid two dollars for them in wheat at 50 cents a bushel. In other words, I gave four bushels of wheat for my shoes.

Another instance of this period: In 1863 I bought a small cook stove, worth not more than four dollars at first cost or wholesale price. For this I gave 40 bushels of wheat—there were no kitchen utensils with it—the money price of the stove was said to be thirty-seven dollars. I paid with wheat. The price of wheat in this case shows that wheat was almost doubled in nominal value from what it was 4 or 5 years ago, but my stove was more than six hundred per cent above its actual value. The Civil War was in progress and that had reduced the value of paper money and increased the cost of iron and labor.

In the villages about the Bear Creek settlement, small stores were started, but their trade was mostly a bartering business. The farmer's wife or daughter carried butter and eggs to these stores. Eggs were sold for from 5 to 8 cents a dozen and butter from 8 to 10 cents a pound. The pay for butter and eggs was always in goods in the store. The farmer's wife or daughter accepted for her burden of products, coffee, tea, sugar, needles, calico, thread, etc. The price on products sold by the farmer and goods received in payment was not regulated by a competitive market, but by the more or less avaricious disposition of the shopkeeper. He fixed the price on the butter and eggs, and likewise the price on his merchandise. The new settler had no choice. He had to do the bartering unconditionally or carry his butter and eggs home.

In 1861 the Civil War broke out and new difficulties and hardships arose in the face of the new settlers in Bear Creek and all over the State of Minnesota. The banking business became chaotic. Up to this time, banks were founded on chattel and real estate securities. Now on account of the confused conditions and uncertain results of the war, property values could not be fixed by any recognized market standard. Banks quoted good one day were found insolvent the next. Gold coins were

in a few weeks withdrawn from circulation by the rich money corners of the Eastern States.

To relieve the money situation, the Federal Government legalized large issues of paper money, popularly known as green back—(legal tender). This class of paper money was not backed by government gold but by the honor and credit of the United States. Green backs, i. e. legal tender bills, were simply evidence of indebtedness of the United States to the bearer and the history about them shows they were redeemed with gold and silver by the United States Treasury.

During the successes and reverses in the war struggle, the gold value of the legal tender fluctuated in the hands of money speculators. During the most uncertain conditions of the war, a gold dollar could hardly be bought for four legal tender dollars. Foreign and domestic merchandise rose and fell in price as the gold market fluctuated. There were stamp duties and taxes on every article of value, private and public documents, and on services of men and animals.

Every able bodied male citizen was enrolled for military services and many of the Bear Creek early colonists voluntarily enlisted in different Minnesota regiments. It has been stated before that Ole Finhart enlisted and served and so did his brother, Amund, in the same company and battery. Arne Hovda and Syver Simonson served in the 11th Minnesota regiment and J. H. J. Weeks served in the first Minnesota heavy artillery as commissary sergeant, and Nels Syversen and Engebret Hovda served as privates in the same company of heavy artillery.

During the first ten years of the Bear Creek colony the people lived on their own production. The only thing for the table bought was coffee; sugar was looked upon as a luxury. From cane raised on the farms they made their own molasses. Several enterprising persons on different sections of the towns built molasses mills where the cane was pressed and the liquid boiled into molasses.

For clothing nearly everything was made at home. The sheep furnished the stuff which was carded and spun and woven into clothes in the little cottage houses of the settlers. Nearly every family owned a home made loom and this occupied a corner on the floor of the main living room. Entering those primitive homes you were generally met by the metric strokes of the batten in the strong hand of the operator, the mother of the



family or one of her daughters. In another corner of the house was the spinning wheel busily turning out woolen yarn or linen thread from flax hemp raised on the farm. Some of the children were busy carding wool for the spinning wheel.

In the same little house and on the same floor with the weaver and spinner was the lord of the home chopping and shaving a yoke and bows for his oxen on an oaken wooden block brought into the room as a necessary utensil in making the heavy equipment for the oxen to work in.

The description given of the industries carried on in the early log house is not yet complete. There was often a woman or man tailor near the table making clothes out of the home manufactured cloth, and often a cobbler was a momentous necessity and he had to have a corner of the house.

On Sundays this house of week day activities was frequently changed into a room for social gatherings or a school room for religious instructions of the settlement children; and sometimes it had to be used instead of a church for worship. These houses were all small in room space. The largest of them was not more than sixteen feet wide by eighteen or twenty feet long, and still the first years, in many of them, two families were sheltered. These settlers applied the old Norwegian saying: "Where there is heart room there is house room."

The settlement in social relations was very much like a large family and many instances could be written of one family or several aiding where temporary wants were known, and to the honor of the colony it can be said that little or no friction disturbed the general fraternal feeling in connection with the selection of claims, etc. In the few cases where greed made ripples, it was not of such serious nature that it lead to any lasting feud among any of the families.

This colony was a competent collection of skilled mechanics as well as farmers. Many of them were carpenters; several blacksmiths, one an artistic turner, a couple wagon makers; three shoemakers and tanners; several stone masons and plasterers, and every man could hew and fit a log into the wall of a log house.

During many of the first years the Bear Creek colonists took no part in town or county politics, from sheer modesty, fearing they were not competent in language or knowledge of American governmental methods, they never advanced a sug-

gestion in town or county organization. A few Yankees as they called their English speaking neighbors were allowed free actions to name the towns and to organize the county, and the results show even today that those assumptive first officials were incompetent and careless. The county commissioners of Mower County allowed the Olmsted County commissioners to take one whole tier of sections from Mower County and annexed them to Olmsted County without a protest. To Mower County this blunder is a permanent loss.

The first township official of Norwegian lineage in Frankford township was Ole Finhart. He was elected township supervisor. Some years after Finhart's election, Ole Jorgens was elected Justice of the Peace. Mr. Bostwick, who by Jorgen's election had to give up the office made the remark, it was a disgrace to Frankford Township to elect an ignorant boy foreigner for a Justice office. He said he had never heard of any such thing before in all his life, and he was at that time an old man. J. H. J. Weeks was about the same time elected constable. The Norwegian settlers began by this time to attend town caucuses and town elections.

A United States Post Office was established in the center of the Bear Creek settlement during the year 1860 with an American by the name of B. F. Langworthy as Postmaster. Nine-tenths of the patrons of the post office were of Norse extraction, and yet a home like name was not given to the post office or any of the towns to indicate for the future that these people were the first settlers in this part of Mower County. Mrs. Langworthy was the active postoffice clerk or deputy postmaster. Although she was a practical and intelligent lady, she had often great difficulties in reading the Norwegian names and in such predicaments she invented ridiculous constructions on their names for the merriment of her American friends, and she very reluctantly admitted a Norwegian child or adult into her kitchen to receive the mail. Her kitchen was the real postoffice and the depository of mail matters was a little wooden box partitioned off into a few pigeon holes. She trained her Norwegian patrons to remain outside her kitchen door till she found their mail and then she delivered the mail through the door.

The name Bear Creek is prominent in this sketch, but the creek itself is now almost a dry run. Before 50 years ago the Bear Creek was a very beautiful stream of water. The creek

proper was made of two branches. The north branch started about the northwest corner of Grand Meadow and the southwest corner of Pleasant Valley. This branch from 50 to 60 years ago was a running stream, had several small lakes in it, or rather large ponds, and an abundance of fish. The south branch had its beginning on the high prairie a couple of miles north and west of the Village of Dexter. If during the coming 50 years these branches dry up and disappear as they have during the past 50 years, the people then living will wonder where the historic Bear Creek had its basins and ditches.

It is stated before that the first party of the first Bear Creek colonists started out on the journey for Minnesota from Dane County, Wisconsin, and the real starting point was Spring Dale. It may be asked what route did these emigrants follow through Wisconsin into Minnesota. It is stated by Syver Hovda at this date that so far as he remembers they passed through Blue Mound and Dodgeville and crossed the Mississippi River at Prairie du Chien. They and their teams and cattle were taken over the Mississippi River on a ferry drawn across by horses in a treading power. They landed in McGregor, Iowa, and proceeded in a northwesterly direction passing Postville and Frankville, and next Decorah. Leaving Decorah they traveled almost in a due northerly direction through Winnesheik County into Minnesota Territory and entering Minnesota in Fillmore County, they followed the most passable trail through this county till they reached Spring Valley and here they were on the border of their point of destination.



## MY CHURCH

My church, My church! My dear old church!  
My father's and my own!  
On Prophets and Apostles built, and Christ the corner stone,  
All else beside, by storm or tide, may yet be over-thrown;  
But not my church, my dear old church,  
My father's and my own!

My church, My church! My dear old church!  
My glory and my pride!  
Firm in faith Immanuel taught, She holds no faith beside.  
Upon this rock, 'gainst every shock, Tho gates of hell assail,  
She stands secure, with promise sure "They never shall prevail."

My church, My church! My dear old church!  
I love her ancient name;  
And God forbid, a child of hers, Should ever do her shame!  
Her mother-care I'll ever share; Her child I am alone,  
Till He who gave me to her arms shall call me to His own.

My church, My church! I love my church!  
For she exalts my Lord!  
She speaks, she breathes, she teaches not but from His written  
word;  
And if her voice bids me rejoice, from all my sins released,  
'Tis through the atoning sacrifice, and Jesus is the Priest.

















**HECKMAN**  
BINDERY INC.



**DEC 97**

Bound-To-Please® N. MANCHESTER,  
INDIANA 46962

